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Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1652
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EXDIS

E. O. 11652: XGDS
TAGS: MASS MARR MCAP TH
SUBJECT: THAI VOLUNTEERS

REF: STATE 050855

1. I APPRECIATE OPPORTUNITY TO SUBMIT ADDITIONAL COMMENTS RE THAI VOLUNTEER PROGRAM IN VIEW CURRENT AND FUTURE IMPORTANCE THIS PROGRAM TO RLG, RTG AND USG.

2. IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING WITHDRAWAL OF VOLUNTEERS FROM LAOS (PRESUMABLY NOT LATER THAN MAY 23) WE SEE CLEAR REQUIREMENT FOR FULL 30- BATTALION FORCE WITH COMMAND ELEMENTS, SUPPORT UNITS AND ALL CURRENTLY- HELD WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT TO BE KEPT IN STATE OF READINESS IN THAILAND UNTIL JUDGMENT MADE IN WASHINGTON THAT CEASEFIRE IN LAOS WILL HOLD AND THAT FURTHER NEED FOR THIS FULL FORCE UNLIKELY. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW WE CAN NOW DETERMINE EXACT PERIOD OF TIME FULL FORCE SHOULD BE KEPT IN READINESS IN THAILAND SINCE BEHAVIOR OF ENEMY WILL BE MAIN FACTOR IN THIS EQUATION. I FORESEE POSSIBILITY THAT FULL FORCE (30 BATTALIONS, ETC.) COULD BE REQUIRED FOR UP TO 90 DAYS AFTER WITHDRAWAL FROM LAOS, AND PERHAPS EVEN LONGER, WHICH TAKES US BEYOND 1 JULY. THEREFORE, I THINK IT ONLY SIDE TO BE FLEXIBLE ENOUGH IN OUR PLANNING TO BE PREPARED TO SUPPORT THIS COURSE IF THE SITUATION SO DICTATES. FAILURE TO BE PREPARED CAN ONLY INCUR FURTHER DIFFICULTIES IF THE CEASEFIRE IN LAOS BECOMES UNGLUED.

3. LOOKING BEYOND TIME WHEN JUDGEMENT HAS BEEN MADE THAT FURTHER
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Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

NEED UNLIKELY FOR FULL FORCE DESCRIBED ABOVE, I BELIEVE TWO CONSIDERATIONS ARE PARAMOUNT: (1) IF ANY VOLUNTEER FORCE RETAINED AT ALL, IT MUST BE LARGE ENOUGH TO BE CAPABLE OF PERFORMING ANY ANTICIPATED MISSION; (2) ANY SUCH FORCE MUST INCLUDE ARTILLERY AND PROVISIONS FOR HELICOPTER GUNSHIP ESCORT FOR MED- EVAC AIRCRAFT.

4. AS TO SIZE OF FORCE TO BE RETAINED, WE DO NOT REPEAT NOT CONSIDER EIGHT BATTALIONS NEARLY ENOUGH IN LIGHT OF EXPERIENCES IN LAOS OVER PAST SEVERAL YEARS. IF WE HOPE TO MAKE IMPRESSION AGAINST DETERMINED ENEMY IN LAOS IF CEASEFIRE BREAKS DOWN, STRONGLY BELIEVE WE SHOULD BE PREPARED WITH MINIMUM VOLUNTEER FORCE OF FIFTEEN INFANTRY BATTALIONS, INCLUDING COMMAND ELEMENTS, AND HEAVY WEAPONS SUPPORT. (NECESSARY LOGISTICAL AND AIR SUPPORT ASSUMED.) SERIOUSLY DOUBT THAT ANY FORCE SMALLER THAN FIFTEEN BATTALIONS WOULD BE OF MUCH USE IN CRITICAL SITUATION.

5. I BELIEVE IT ESSENTIAL TO INCLUDE THIA- MANNED ARTILLERY AS PART OF ANY THAI VOLUNTEER FORCE. FOR FORCE OF FIFTEEN INFANTRY BATTALIONS, BELIEVE WE SHOULD PLAN TO INCLUDE TWO ARTILLERY BATTALIONS. CANNOT ENVISAGE RTG BEING SATISFIED WITH LESS. LIKEWISE, RTG KEEN INTEREST IN HELICOPTER GUNSHIP ESCORT FOR MED- EVAC PURPOSES CERTAIN TO MAKE THIS SUPPORT MANDATORY FOR ANY VOLUNTEER FORCE.

6. IN LINE WITH FOREGOING WHEN SITUATION PERMITS REDUCTION FROM FULL FORCE, BELIEVE WE SHOULD PLAN NOW SO AS TO BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN FORCES DESCRIBED PARA 4 AND 5 ABOVE THROUGH FY 74. IF SITUATION IMPROVES, IT IS RELATIVELY EASY TO REDUCE OR DISBAND THE FORCE IN SHORT PERIOD OF TIME; UNFORTUNATELY, REVERSE IS NOT TRUE. BELIEVE IT IMPERATIVE TO KEEP THAI REACTION TIME IN MIND WHEN CONSIDERING POSSIBLE FUTURE LAO REQUIREMENTS IN EMERGENCY SITUATION.

7. RE PARA 2 REFTEL, REALIZE FUNDING PROBLEMS STILL BEING WORKED ON BUT IN MEANTIME WOULD APPRECIATE SHORT MESSAGE AS TO " AGREED" DISPOSITION OF WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT. MY POSITION ON THIS ASPECT OF VOLUNTEER PROGRAM REPORTED IN BANGKOK 0434 AND REMAINS SAME.
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